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THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN.

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The Children's Garden

By Eleanor Withey Willard.

With Illustrations from Photographs by

Fedora E. D. Brown.

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Introductory.

A FRIEND of ours once said that his summer garden was always at the highest point of its glory in February, when the flower catalogues came, and his imagination saw with cheerful optimism the gorgeous bloom of June. In this hopeful spirit we put forth, in the middle of December, this little tale of "A Children's Garden," not for any flower lore that it contains, but for the sake of suggesting, in the midst of cold, snow and blizzard, the pleasant meditations that faith in a blossoming future may induce. And if, incidentally, it shall stimulate in any children of these modern days, an interest in some of the simple and natural ways of finding pleasure, we shall feel that our summer pastoral has not been amiss, even in midwinter.

THE MICHIGAN TRUST CO.

December 25, 1904.

"Accept, I beseech your Majesty, this speaking Garden, that may inform you in all particulars of your store, as well as wants, when you cannot see any of them fresh upon the ground."

The Garden of Pleasant Flowers.

John Parkinson, 1620

The Children's Garden.

A LONG time ago, when I was a little girl, there lived next door to us an old lady who had a beautiful garden. At least Barbara and I and Arthur and the twins thought it was a beautiful garden, though it wasn't the least bit like other gardens we knew about.

One thing that made it nice was that there was no gardener to tell you that you must keep out, and who looked cross if you even peeped through the fence. The old lady herself was the gardener, and SHE said that anyone who really

loved flowers loved children, and she never minded our coming into the garden, although of course we understood that we were to be well-mannered, and not destroy things; and we loved the old lady so well that we never picked the flowers without asking. Another reason why we liked the garden was because it was not kept very trim and neat and regular, like a gardener's garden, but just grew a good deal as it pleased. The hollyhocks bumped up against the sweet peas, and the poppies grew in the grassy borders, and the phlox was mixed in with the asparagus, and the myrtle spread round

under the trees wherever it wanted to go; and we children knew that all the flowers enjoyed having their liberty. There were clumps of marguerites in the open spaces, and black-eyed Susans in the orchard, and the old lady was just as fond of these as she was of her lilies and tulips. We children loved them a little better, because we could pick as many as we liked, and they made such beautiful daisy chains.

We liked the dandelions that grew in the front yard, and the old lady owned up that she did too, although some people complained that they spoiled the lawns. Our old lady did not have any lawn, but she had things that we thought much nicer. There was a brook down at the back of the garden, where we waded and paddled by the hour. Along the banks there grew forget-me-nots and wild honeysuckle, and violets and lady-slippers, and ever so many other flowers.

There were four-leaf clovers, too, down in the orchard, and on a warm summer day there was nothing we girls liked better than sitting under the apple trees hunting them. And in the autumn we were sometimes allowed to build a little bonfire in the meadow beyond and roast some of the apples.

Mother used to say that the garden was her greatest help in bringing us up; it kept us out of mischief and improved our dispositions. Barbara couldn't understand how a garden could have any effect on dispositions, but I knew. It was because of the garden that we loved our neighbor as ourselves—it

was so easy to love the old lady—and Mother always said that selfishness was "the worst sin in the calendar," because it lead to all the other sins—though what the calendar had to do with it even I did not know. But when we were in the garden, we hated being selfish, for we knew the old

lady would despise us if there was any greediness, or snatching, or not sharing what we had, and we couldn't bear to have the old lady despise us.

She gave us a little square of ground for our very own, and there we hoed, and weeded, and potted and planted just as we liked. Each of us had our own little plot, in which we grew our favorite flowers. Arthur's was largely set out with hollyhocks and sunflowers, for he said they were "the giants of the garden," and Arthur had a particular fancy for giants. Barbara and I had pansies, and nasturtiums, and bouncing-Bets and

stock-gillies and poppies. We especially liked the poppies, because there were so many beautiful shades of red and pink, which were our favorite colors. But Arthur would have none of them, for he said they smelt like laudanum when you had the tooth-ache. We said even that was better than having no smell at all, like his holly-hocks and sun-flowers, but Arthur insisted that it would be very much out of character for giants to wear perfume, and we had to admit that he was right.

The twins' plot did not come on very well, princi-

pally because they kept pulling things up to see if they were growing.

You see, the twins were only five, and they liked digging in the dirt better than waiting for plants to grow. They were always happy when they could "pot things," and they potted a great many that were never intended to be treated that way. When, one day, they potted one of my new red hair-ribbons, with the ends sticking up for a "geranimum", I decided that their gardening needed an overseer.

We played a great many

games in the garden, in which the flowers had a part, but one day we got into trouble playing the "Garden of Eden." We had all been wading in the brook, with our bathing suits on, for Mother always wished us to wear them when we went wading because we got our clothes drabbled if we did not. All of a sudden, Arthur, who was very ingenious at inventing games, cried out, "O, girls, let's play Garden of Eden! You, Mary, can be Adam, and Barbara can be Eve, and here's the apple tree, and the twins can be angels, and I—"

Just then Mother came

out and looked over the fence, and saw Arthur strutting round under the apple tree in his wet bathing suit.

"Children, what ARE you doing?" she called.

"O", shouted back Arthur, without a thought of how it would sound, "We're playing Garden of Eden. Mary and Barbara are Adam and Eve, and I'm God, walking in the Garden in the cool of the day!"

Of course Mother was terribly shocked, and Arthur was called home at once, and there was a very serious conversation in-doors. *I* knew that Arthur did not mean to be irreverent, he was only carrying out the game, but I suppose he got spanked just the same.

The old lady taught us a good deal about the flowers—about planting and watering, and what kind of soil they needed. She spent a great deal of time among her flowers, for she said she did love "grubbing;" and she had the "lucky fingers" for which everything grew. It never seemed to matter where she dropped her seeds, they always came

up, and though she always cautioned us to plant only fresh seeds, SHE could scatter from any old packet, and they never failed to grow.

She taught us in transplanting to be very careful, in warm weather, to do it only in the evening, so as to give the plants "the round of the clock" for cool rest before the sun grew hot upon

them; and in cold weather we were to do our moving in the morning, so as to save them for the same length of time from possible frost. But for herself the time of day never seemed to count— if she put her cuttings in at noon-day her "lucky fingers" gave the charm that saved them from the heat, or if she set them out on a cold autumn evening, there was never frost that night.

We all missed our garden when the long winter months came, even though we had some of our flowers growing in window-boxes. But the old lady kept our interest warm even when the deep snow was on the ground. We spent long hours looking over the seed catalogues she sent us, picking out our favorites and planning the garden we would make in the spring. And once when we were busy over our books, Mother said, "Children, did you know that a very long time ago, before seed catalogues ever were made, a man in England wrote a book all about a garden, and presented it to his Queen, that she might read about her flowers in the winter-time, when she could not see them 'fresh upon the ground'. But I don't suppose his book had any pictures in it, for it was written in 1620."

And of course we wanted to know more about the book and who the man was that wrote it, and she told us that his name was John Parkinson, and that he was the King's Herbarist. The old book was in Father's library, and was called "The Garden of Pleasant Flowers." Mother got it down

and read to us the queer old dedication to the Queen, and then she asked us who were King and Queen in 1620, and although Arthur and I had both been studying English history,

neither of us could tell. But Mother sent us to find out, and we always remembered afterwards that King Charles the First reigned in 1620, and that Henrietta was his Queen. Then, after looking over the old book, all at once WE were inspired to make a "flower book." We cut from the catalogue our most dearly loved flowers, and hunted out others from old magazines. Mother gave us a nice scrap-book to put them in,— "Only" she said, with a sly look at Arthur, "I hope you won't name your book The Garden of Eden."

Just then Barbara had a thought—

"Let's put ourselves into the book!"

At first we did not understand how a number of children not very small could be got between the leaves of a book not very large, but when Barbara explained her idea, we all thought it was a good one, and we set at work hunting for pictures of children among flowers or in gardens. It was surprising how many we found. We put them in the book along with the other pictures, and named the children for ourselves, or for

those who had played with us in our real garden. Only we could not find any picture that would do for the twins, and the twins wanted very much to be put in the book, and we all felt badly about

leaving them out. So mother asked the gentleman who lived on the other side of us, and who was a photographer, to take a real picture of the twins, and he said if we could wait till spring, he would take them in our own garden, which of course, would be much nicer for our book than a winter scene. So we waited, and when the spring came, and the leaves were out, and the twins were once more "potting things," he took the picture. Then our book was finished, and Mother said, "You had better call it 'The Children's Garden', for it has in it most of the flowers that children love."

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